

Challenges for Change
Group 2: Child Care Referral and Financial Assistance System
Meeting Notes November 10, 2010

Request to post notes from Meeting #3

Stakeholders requested that the notes from Meeting #3 get posted. Only the “emerging product” is currently posted.

Suggested Revisions to the Emerging Product on Modernization

The following are comments offered by stakeholders in the review of the “emerging agreements.” Stakeholders were asked to identify any statements missing or misrepresented from prior discussion; not new ideas/proposals

Challenges for Change Child Care Referral and Financial Assistance System

EMERGING PRODUCT: MODERNIZATION

Mandate: consider the impacts of implementing modernization of eligibility for CC Financial Assistance in the DCF system on families and CC providers; make recommendations to the legislature on how to preserve full access to high quality child development services for Vermont families, especially those experiencing adversity or barriers.

Key Questions:

1. What are the implications of modernization of eligibility on access to child care financial assistance for families and for child care providers?
2. What local supports would be needed to implement and manage the system and preserve full access to services?

Stakeholder Goals for Modernization (see goals for CCR&R)

- Increase family access to multiple resources
- Improve flow of information to speed eligibility approval & payment to providers
- Stabilize system for providers – SEE CAPACITY; timely and accurate resolution of eligibility determination and no interruption of revenue
- Support human element for families in accessing information and eligibility
- Ensure eligibility determination for child care regardless of business practices related to other ESD benefits
- Give parents tools to self-navigate
- Maintain caution re: confidentiality via community supports
- Maintain ability for face to face as needed during the transition period and beyond

Primary Stakeholder Concerns—turn into goals; currently sound less important

The stakes are high for families and providers if there is a delay in eligibility determination. The following are the key concerns related to the impending change. Specific suggestions can be found in the next section.

Capacity – Stakeholders are concerned that a decreased number of staff designated for eligibility determination, and shift from community based to a centralized system, will increase delay in reimbursement for child care providers that provide care for families determined eligible. A delay in payment puts the child care provider at risk and could potentially decrease the number of providers willing and/or able to provide child care for children/families with child care financial assistance. These families and children would then have fewer options/choices for child care. Providers are already stretched. Caution that a shift from community based to centralized administration will increase expectations for providers to assist parents in eligibility process.

Consistency – In the current proposal, the Childhood Development Division (CDD) will remain the primary contact and support for child care providers. The Economic Services Division (ESD) will serve as the primary contact and support to parents. Currently, some community agencies are having experiences that ESD is not seen as a support for parents. The interface and exchange of information between these two systems if the proposal moves forward is essential. Consistency in the interpretation and implementation of policy will be critical. Regardless of the model, the communications loop between CDD, ESD, providers and families needs to be closed.

Continuity of relationships – Responsive relationship based service is essential. For many families and providers, the ability to maintain a relationship with individuals responsible for eligibility determination is critical. This is especially true for vulnerable families, e.g., families request assistance in compiling necessary information to complete applications. Stakeholders urged the opportunity for personal connect between provider and eligibility determination worker. For example, alerts to the provider regarding the status of application would enable the provider to follow up with family. Additionally, stakeholders want a consistent person who handles eligibility for a particular family.

Stakeholder Suggestions/Recommendations:

Overall policy and supports

- Ensure ESD modernized system is able handle existing caseload within required CCFP performance standards before the CDD hands CCFAP to ESD;
- Some propose keeping FAP in the community based system until ESD is able to handle existing caseload within required CCFAP performance standards Clarify standard for application process and timeline for eligibility determination
- Standardize data needed and policies across benefits including: income verification criteria and process, renewal dates, policies related to FAP, Reach UP, 3 Squares, health care assistances, and household size.
- Provide guidance on methods for increase completion of application that are consistently deficient
- Maintain and update information for enable tracking

For providers

- Allow personal connect between provider and eligibility determination worker
- Create consent form to share with families to access information from ESD
- Alert provider regarding status of application to enable providers to follow up with family as needed to expedite the eligibility process
- Track payment history by individual child
- Track by family name rather than document #
- Provide guidance on ways to support families in transition if they don't meet eligibility

For families

- Create tools for public education for parents to self-navigate and understand what's happening, where and how to get information to navigate the new system (tutorials, libraries, brochures)
- Enable communication beyond written notice; face to face and calls are important – especially hard to reach families, e.g., families who are homeless or families who need individualized communication, e.g., families with low literacy levels
- Provide translation, interpretation services and literacy support

Next Steps:

- Finalize the product on modernization
- Finalize the shared goals on child care referrals
- Referral
 - Identify questions for parents for focus groups
 - Options and questions for next steps related to future development to child care referral.